











*Frontispiece by Nandalal Bose*



R. R. DIWAKAR

# SATYAGRAHA IN ACTION

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF GANDHIJI'S  
SATYAGRAHA CAMPAIGNS



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'ASK ME to suspend my activities in that (Satyagraha) direction and you ask me to suspend my life. If I could popularise the use of soul-force, in place of brute-force, I know that I could present you with an India that could defy the whole world to do its worst. I shall discipline myself to express in my life this eternal law of suffering, and present it for acceptance to those who care, and if I take part in any other activity, the motive is to show the matchless superiority of that law...'

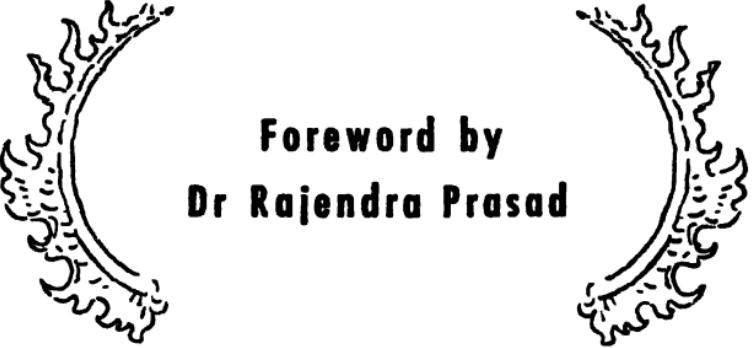
**Gandhi**

in 1917 in a statement regarding war effort



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## Foreword by Dr Rajendra Prasad

IN THIS PAMPHLET Sri R. R. Diwakar has summarised some of the more important Satyagraha movements carried out by or under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji returned to India after 21 years' residence in South Africa in 1915. It was in South Africa that he discovered and developed the technique of his peculiar and unique method of non-violent resistance to evil and gave it the name of Satyagraha. Satyagraha differs from passive resistance fundamentally in that it eschews violence in any form as a matter of principle and not only on account of the weakness or inability of the resister to offer violent resistance. This difference was brought out in every campaign in South Africa and in India which Mahatma Gandhi inaugurated and led. The objective of a

Satyagrahi is not to cause embarrassment to the opponent and thus force him to yield the demand but to convert him to the Satyagrahi's viewpoint so that he yields out of his own free will. The natural result, therefore, of every successful Satyagraha is to secure the objective without leaving any bitterness behind and it thus blesses both the resister and his opponent. It took more than twenty-five years for India to win freedom from the British after Mahatma Gandhi took the lead of the Movement for attaining freedom in India. The country in the main may be said to have followed his program of non-violent resistance. Although there were lapses occasionally, it cannot be said that there was violence on any large scale in the country during this long period, inspite of provocations. Ultimately the British yielded and left the country transferring all power to Indians, thus furnishing a most marvellous example of how non-violence works unseen and undetected and succeeds when all seems lost. The British as a nation are no less pleased than Indians with this happy ending of a struggle which was as unique as its leader. The reader can get some idea of the method and its

working from this book. But for further information and details he has necessarily to go to the author's larger work and the writings of Mahatma Gandhi and the books mentioned in the Bibliography.

25th October 1949

*Rajendra Prasad*



## Introduction

THE MAIN OBJECT of this booklet is to acquaint the reader with the outlines of all the Satyagraha campaigns that Gandhiji himself led or directed. The reader would thereby understand the practical nature of this Gandhian way of dealing with disputes and conflicts. I say outlines because it is not possible in such a short compass to give all the stories in full. There are separate books dealing with many of them individually and I have enumerated most of such books in the bibliography. Those who are curious and wish to study this subject more thoroughly will have to refer to them.

I have, of course, not included incidents or agitation such as that regarding the Viramgaon Customs for instance, which were also based on Satyagraha prin-

ples. That is because I have restricted myself to campaigns which involved organization of big numbers or masses. Nor have I included fasts or any Satyagraha by Gandhiji which, though in the interest of the public, was in the nature of individual action, not involving any movement by big groups or masses.

I have tried to be as brief and factual as is consistent with presenting an understandable picture of these events. But I could not avoid the personality of Gandhiji and some of his characteristic traits projecting themselves in these chapters. How could I avoid such a rich and colourful personality from showing itself when I was describing the doings of that very personality? Moreover, how could I justify such suppression since so many of the things done and caused to be done were so intensely personal? There cannot be any divorce in such a case between the person and his actions which were but a part of his being. I think these pages would have been drier and duller if I had succeeded in allowing less of his personality to come in.

In order to give a proper background to these Satyagraha stories in outline, I have stated in brief the

principles and significance of Satyagraha in the first chapter. The reader will find a fuller and more exhaustive treatment of this whole subject in my other book called, *Satyagraha, Its History and Technique*, Indian Edition, published by Hind Kitabs, Bombay, or in *Satyagraha: The Power of Truth*, its American Edition, published in the Humanist Library series. These brief stories here read along with the first chapter of this booklet will, I hope, make the reader feel that what Gandhiji preached and practised was not something which was applicable only to India and Indian conditions, but is capable of being repeated anywhere in the world where similar circumstances obtain. Satyagraha does not depend on geological or geographical conditions, or on political considerations for its operations but is based on a study of human nature and the dynamics of human psychology.

Gandhiji seems to have carried on his experiments in Satyagraha in a scientific spirit though even from the beginning he had the fullest conception of the potency of the new weapon. He had unfaltering faith and almost infinite patience. He was never confused regarding ends and means and ever held that only

moral means would lead to moral ends. That is the secret of his having been able to evolve a complete technique of his method. He often called it the science and art of Satyagraha.

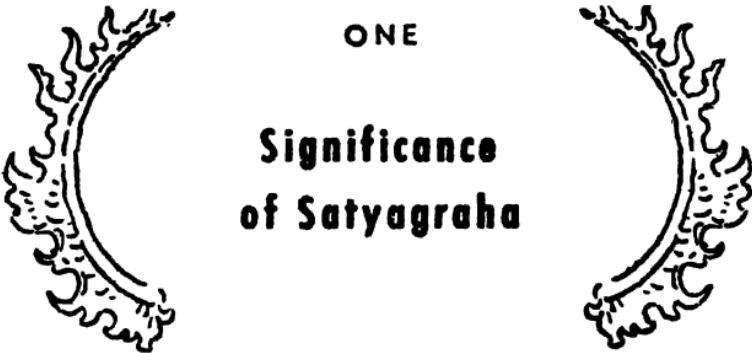
It is a pity that Gandhiji had neither the time nor the occasion to try Satyagraha under certain circumstances, such as non-violent opposition to an armed invasion or non-violent intervention in a war between two nations. It is left to posterity to try those experiments if it believes in the efficacy of the method.

It is obvious that in the present set-up, we cannot expect governments to be based on non-violence. If non-violence or Satyagraha is to progress it is only through organization of groups and societies along those lines. In that way alone one can attempt to promote this principle. Satyagraha began with being a rule of conduct for religious-minded individual souls and saints, Gandhiji showed that it could also be extended to groups and whole masses, now a time may come when nations and states would be organized on that principle.

Gandhiji has now passed away after having lived a life rich with new experiences. He has left to us a

legacy of experiments in a field hitherto unknown to us. It is now for those who wish to usher an age of 'peace on earth and good-will unto men' to study those experiments with a scientific mind and further investigate the potentialities of this new way of fighting all evil with purely moral weapons. Though the 'light' that lit our path so far does not seem to shine any longer in this world, the blazing trail left behind is enough to illumine the path of millions and for decades to come.

*The Author*



## Significance of Satyagraha

SATYAGRAHA is now a word which is most familiar to us. It has practically become synonymous with the name of Gandhiji. It was he who first used it in 1906 to connote the non-violent resistance movement he led against iniquitous and discriminating laws in South Africa. He soon found out that his movement was essentially different from passive resistance and therefore coined this new word. Passive resistance, as commonly understood in the West in its historical setting and as understood by us now, is a weapon of the weak, of the unarmed and the helpless. It does not eschew violence as a matter of principle but only because of lack of the means of violence, or out of sheer expediency. It would use arms if and when they are available or when there is a reasonable chance of

success. Passive resistance may even be preparatory to or go hand in hand with armed resistance. The underlying object is to harass the opponent and thus force him to take the desired course of action. Love has no place in it. It cannot be used against our nearest because it is based on hatred and distrust. There is no place for constructive activity in it. It is not a philosophy of life.

Satyagraha on the other hand, is the law of love, the way of love for all. It eschews violence absolutely as a matter of principle, at all stages and in all forms. It can never be coexistent with any kind of violent activity involving injury to person or property. The idea behind it is not to destroy or harass the opponent, but to convert or win him over by sympathy, by patience and by self-suffering, when necessary. Whilst Satyagraha fights all evil and would never compromise with it, it approaches the evil-doer through love. The Satyagrahi has infinite trust in human nature and in its inherent goodness. Satyagraha as a weapon can be used even against our nearest and dearest. It acts out of love and is willing to suffer to the uttermost for the loved ones. When not actually fighting, Satyagrahis

would engage themselves in constructive social activities in the spirit of service and sacrifice.

Satyagraha in the hands of Gandhiji developed into a philosophy and a way of life. For a Satyagrahi, truth is the one supreme end and non-violence or love the only and the best means. Love in essence is the emotional result of the experience of identity. It is a corollary of the experience of oneness with the object of love. To Gandhiji all life was one and sacred. To injure any life was to injure oneself, to injure God, he would say. Such was the experience of identity he had with all life. Aldous Huxley has described non-violence as the practical consequence of the belief in the fundamental unity of all being. Realisation of this unity of all being leads naturally to unitive life. This Satyagraha as a way of life, is not a single act or a string of actions but an inner attitude and an abiding pose of being. It is an incessant search after truth in everything through non-violence, through the law of love, through self-suffering, if need be. Love often takes the form of selfless service and sacrifice because that is its natural expression, and the resulting joy and ecstasy is its fulfilment.

Here we are concerned more with Satyagraha as a moral weapon for fighting all evil, as a remedy for resolving conflicts so that the way for peace may be clear. We are for ages familiar with it as used by individuals as a defence measure, especially in the field of religion. But the use of it on principle and on a mass scale against all types of iniquity is somewhat novel and original. A Satyagrahi believes in the basic goodness of human nature and is always hopeful of awakening man's sense of fairness. He is sure of human response to suffering and sacrifice. He has as much faith in the law of love as in the law of gravitation.

Satyagraha is certainly intended to replace the brutal methods of violence used in cases of conflict between men and men. It is based on truth, works through non-violence, and achieves its end by converting or by compelling the opponent through moral pressure. One who wishes to adopt the method as a weapon must have at least a working faith in it. This method has a great advantage over all others. You can adopt it against any adversary, however physically strong he might be, and however efficient in the art of violence. You might physically be the weakest and wholly

innocent of the use of violence and yet, if you are fearless and have a strong will, you can cross swords with the mightiest of the earth, even single-handed. Numbers do not count. It is essentially a moral weapon and you do not need the weight of numbers. But the fact that it is a moral weapon imposes an obligation on the user not to use it for an immoral purpose or when one is himself at fault. A man can start on this path only after self-purification. For instance, a slave-owner cannot offer Satyagraha against exploitation of human labour, nor can one use Satyagraha for getting usurious interest.

Since Satyagraha is meant to hit the evil and not the evil-doer, it approaches the person's heart and understanding through service and self-suffering. The Satyagrahi regards it as his business to convert the opponent to his point of view and not to destroy him. This is a corollary from the Satyagrahi's conviction that by self-suffering he can rouse the inner man in the opponent. It is a precondition of his activity that the opponent be converted. Never can Satyagraha contemplate violence to the person. The essence of non-violent resistance is the determination not to do

or intend any harm or injury to the person of the opponent. In general, the same can be said about property. But there may be exceptions in the case of property, when, for instance, such property is essentially and wholly harmful to society. Munitions and liquor may be regarded as cases in point.

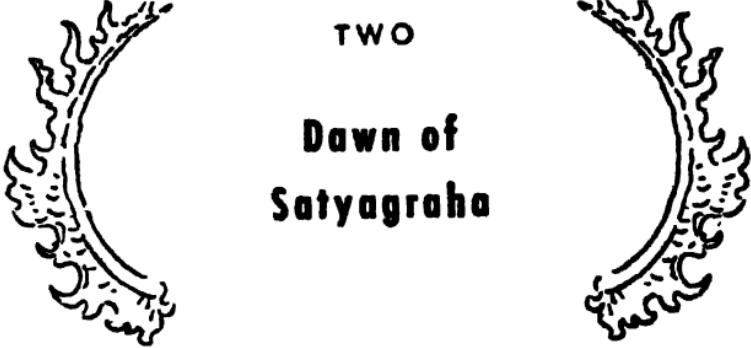
Satyagraha can be offered by an individual, a group or a mass. At this time of the day, it is idle to ask whether such an intricate and highly moral weapon as Satyagraha can be used by gross, illiterate, amorphous masses of men. It is both a matter of common knowledge and recorded history that it can thus be used. In addition to the South African campaign and those of Bardoli, Siddapur, Contai and Tamluk, Satyagraha campaigns on a nation-wide scale in India are a case in point. Is there anywhere else in the world a people so poor, so unlettered, and so meek as the masses of India? And yet India was the scene of mass Satyagraha launched half a dozen times on various occasions during the last thirty-two years. The weapon has been tried on an unprecedented scale and found effective. Hence it is now possible for one to study its various aspects with real benefit.

Satyagraha comes as the last and yet as the most potent of peaceful weapons. After all the remedies, such as constitutional agitation and others have been exhausted, Satyagraha steps in. It takes the place of violent direct action. It comes in where violence would have been resorted to in the ordinary course, had those in command followed the usual methods of resistance and fighting. The dissatisfaction, the tempo of resentment, the degree of desperation, and the inevitability of using the last remedy are the same in Satyagraha as in the case of violent resistance.

Mass Satyagraha is no longer a novelty nor an unknown weapon ; nor is it a voyage upon uncharted seas. Even in 1919 Gandhiji said, "In my opinion, the beauty and efficacy of Satyagraha are so great and the doctrine so simple that it can be preached even to children. It was preached by me to thousands of men, women and children commonly called indentured Indians (in South Africa) with excellent results." (*Young India*, November 5, 1919). Again he wrote, "Whether one takes the Satyagraha pledge or not, there can be no doubt that the spirit of Satyagraha has pervaded the masses." (*Young India*, March 10,

1920). A vigilant, scientific, and successful application of Satyagraha in all fields of life for an unbroken period of at least fifty years confirmed Gandhiji in his opinion that masses were amenable to discipline and could wield the weapon in an effective manner.

There is an amount of literature written by Gandhiji himself about Satyagraha as and when required. It is true that he never had the time to condense all that he wrote into a philosophy and technique. But if one studies all that he has written, reads the stories of Satyagraha campaigns he himself conducted and closely follows his life and conduct, one can easily understand the true significance of the principles that he preached and practised throughout a long and intensely active life. Satyagraha was the essence of his inner experiences and the experiments he carried on according to those experiences. Today, if some of the greatest minds are attracted to his teachings, it is because they ring true to the highest experiences of man.



## Dawn of Satyagraha

BY A STRANGE COINCIDENCE, it was in far off South Africa, three thousand miles away from the land of his birth, that Gandhiji first experimented with his new method of non-violent mass resistance against injustice—political and social. He perfected his technique in the course of long years of struggle by the Indians there with the South African Government in which ultimately he came out successful. A careful study of the development of Satyagraha during those weary years is very important and necessary. It was the seminal period for that particular way of fighting evil with purely moral weapons. Those were also the most formative years in the life of the unique originator of that path of non-violence which was later used in India for achieving freedom and which, in the

end, proved to be his greatest gift to humanity.

It was the lure of getting a little more money and the attraction of visiting a new land that first took Gandhiji to the shores of South Africa. He went there "prompted by self-interest and curiosity," as he puts it. He had been disappointed with his career as a barrister in Bombay and had left it for Rajkot after a six months' stay. But when a chance of going to Africa offered itself he seized it. It was for a legal assignment on behalf of a rich Indian firm in Porbander. He set sail in April 1893.

But apart from his legal work, what did Gandhiji find there? On the very day of his landing he observed that the Indians, to put it very mildly, "were not held in much respect." The conditions of life for them were simply intolerable. All Indians except those who chose to call themselves 'Arabs,' were 'coolies' i.e. porters. He himself came to be called a 'coolie barrister.' On his first informal visit to the court, he was asked by the Magistrate to remove his Indian turban. Local newspapers chose to call him an 'unwelcome visitor.' He was thrown out of his first-class compartment at Maritzburg for no fault of his but

that he was an Indian. He was thrashed by the conductor of a coach for not agreeing to sit down at his feet though he was entitled to sit within the coach. In Transvaal it was still worse. First and second class tickets were hardly ever issued to Indians. He was refused admission in the Grand National Hotel at Johannesburg. The Natal Law Society opposed his being enrolled as a barrister on the ground that he was coloured, though fortunately the objection was not upheld. There was thus no end to humiliation and persecution of Indians throughout South Africa.

After some of these preliminary experiences, "Should I fight for my rights or go back to India?" was the question that knocked at Gandhiji's heart. "To run back would be cowardly" was his conclusion. He decided to stay and fight. It was this decision which was responsible for his "most important experiments in South Africa."

On an invitation by the Government of the day, the Indians first entered South Africa as indentured labourers in 1860. Since then their numbers went on increasing and by 1893 there were more than about 200,000 of them. Half that number consisted of those

who were once indentured but who later attained their free citizenship. A quarter of them came to the continent as free citizens and continued as such. There were people speaking different languages and of all communities among them, but more or less all equally suffered at the hands of the whites.

The grievances from which the Indians suffered were manifold—social, political and economic. All of them originated in racial prejudices and consequent discrimination in all fields. Another very important reason was the competition with Europeans by Indians especially in the field of trade and commerce. The average European feared that with his simple and lower standard of living the Indian would beat him in the economic field. So the Europeans sought to justify their conduct on the ground of self-preservation. In addition to the social disabilities therefore, Indians suffered from a number of discriminatory 'black laws.' Every ex-indentured Indian labourer had to pay a poll-tax of £3 if he wished to settle down there, and a similar amount for his wife and for every son and daughter above sixteen. None could trade without a licence. Europeans got licences merely for the asking,

while Indians experienced great difficulties in getting them. Then there was the Education Test Act, according to which an immigrant was obliged to pass a test in one of the European languages. Those who had settled three years earlier were, however, exempt from the operation of this Act. Even while the agitation against the Asiatic Registration Bill of 1906 was on, the Transvaal Immigrants Registration Act was passed in 1907, which practically closed the door for any new Indian immigrant even if he passed the language test.

The grossness of the iniquity was all the more vivid because, in the words of Sir Leige Hulett, the Ex-Prime Minister of Natal (1903), "the condition of the colony before the importation of Indian labour was one of gloom... Durban was absolutely built up by the Indian population." 'Ungrateful' would be the only appropriate word to be used in this connection.

Unlettered, poor, disunited and neglected as it was, the Indian community had not been able to organize or consolidate itself till Gandhiji set his mind on it. Groups here and there had carried on some kind of feeble and futile agitation against certain grievances.

But they had never gone beyond the stage of petitions and representations.

After a year of his stay, Gandhiji was about to return to India in 1894. One day, by chance, he glanced at the columns of *Natal Mercury*, a local journal, and was disturbed to read that on top of everything, the Legislature there was going to disenfranchise Indians. When he brought this to the notice of his friends, they immediately urged him not to go and assured him that they would fight against the measure under his guidance. He stayed on and the Natal Indian Congress was founded in May 1894. There was great enthusiasm and hundreds were enrolled as members and many more paid money to carry on the agitation. The news that Lord Ripon had disallowed the disenfranchising Bill came in the meanwhile as a happy surprise and put new heart into the people. But Gandhiji, as was his wont, was not satisfied merely by agitation. He set about the question of internal improvement such as sanitation, hygiene, education, more decent living, separate buildings for shops and residence and so on.

Between 1894 and 1906, Gandhiji kept on going

and coming to and from India. But he utilised all his time in building up the strength of the people in Africa and a strong informed public opinion in India. His sincerity, service and sacrifice endeared him to his community beyond measure. His truthfulness, straightforward and open dealings, his readiness to serve even his opponents in times of stress such as the Boer War, made his political enemies look upon him with respect. But the main grievances of Indians remained unredressed all these years.

Ultimately the storm gathered round the Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance. Gandhiji first read it in the *Transvaal Government Gazette Extraordinary* of 22nd July 1906. Mr Joseph J. Doke wrote as follows about it :

"For some eighteen months, the Asiatic community which numbered about ten thousand throughout Transvaal, naturally a loyal and law-abiding community, has been in revolt against the Government. The Asiatic Law Amendment Act, which was based on the theory that the Asiatics had inaugurated a widespread fraudulent traffic in 'permits' and was consequently a criminal community, to be legislated against as

criminals, awakened intense indignation amongst them. They clamoured for proof of this traffic, but were refused. They appealed to have the charges investigated by a Judge of the Supreme Court, but the appeal was ignored. They had no parliamentary vote, and no representative in Parliament, so nothing remained but either to give outward sign of the criminal in registration—which was the impression of the digits—or resist the Law. They decided on resistance. Fortunately, their leader was a refined, gentle, chivalrous man, a disciple of Tolstoy and the resistance took the form of Passive Resistance... I said yesterday to him, 'My friend, it is likely to be a long struggle—England is careless, and the Government here is like iron.' He replied, 'It does not matter. If the trial is long, my people will be purified by it, and victory is sure to come.' "

Commenting on this piece of legislation, Gandhiji said, "I have never known legislation of this nature being directed against free men in any part of the world... There are some drastic laws directed against (so-called) criminal tribes in India, with which this Ordinance can be easily compared... Finger-prints are

required by law only from criminals. I was, therefore, shocked by this compulsory requirement regarding finger-prints."

After deep thought and excited debates, the Indian community took the decision in a crowded meeting of three thousand delegates held in Johannesburg on 11th September 1906 to resist the insulting Ordinance. An oath was administered to each delegate to resist the law at all costs. Gandhiji declared, "So long as there is even a handful of men true to their people, there can only be one end to the struggle, and that is victory."

This then was the genesis of the movement which came to be known as Satyagraha.

Before advising people to launch Satyagraha, it must be noted that Gandhiji had exhausted all other peaceful remedies. Preliminary to actual resistance, the usual petitions, deputations, interviews and correspondence were carried on. But Mr Duncan, the Colonial Secretary, told them definitely that the Government deemed the Ordinance essential for the existence of the Europeans there.

Thus the stage was set. Refusal to register, to give

finger-prints, and to receive permits was the form which Satyagraha took. Satyagrahis got ready to suffer the consequences of their refusal to obey the law.

The 1st of July 1907 saw the opening of the permit offices of the Government, in accordance with the new Ordinance. Gandhiji organized peaceful picketing of the offices. Even boys of twelve enrolled themselves as pickets. Though some five hundred persons registered and took permits, the Government could not proceed further and decided to arrest the organizers and resisters.

The crisis came in December 1907 when notices were issued against prominent members of the Indian community to appear before the Court and show cause why they had not yet registered. Many including Gandhiji were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. But on 30th January 1908, promises were given by General Smuts and as a result of some settlement, Gandhiji, along with some other important members, was released. General Smuts promised to repeal the Ordinance and validate registration provided the Indians registered voluntarily. Indians did their part. The leaders did it even at the risk of being misunder-

stood by their followers. But General Smuts did not fulfil his part of the agreement and broke the promises he had made previously. The Ordinance was not repealed. He did not even give satisfactory replies to Gandhiji's letters. On the other hand, another bill was introduced effectively barring all further Indian immigration. That bill was later passed into Law.

The resumption of the struggle became inevitable. A meeting of the delegates was called at Johannesburg on 16th September 1908, when a big bonfire of the certificates, which had been taken out voluntarily in pursuance of the settlement, was planned. Two thousand certificates were flung into the fire that day.

Then began the long and arduous struggle when fines, imprisonments, hard labour and hardships, harassment, insults, flogging and even firing were the resisters' lot. Deputations to England and the Indian Government had proved utterly useless. On 13th March 1913, a High Court judgement invalidated all Indian marriages as being not in accord with the local law. This was a brazen insult to Indian women who were stung to the quick and joined the struggle. All those who were inmates of the Phoenix Park

(Gandhiji's African Ashram) crossed over to Transvaal in a batch of sixteen and they were all sentenced. Some of the Tamil ladies who were not arrested went to the mines and roused the labourers there against the iniquities of the £3 tax. This agitation finally culminated in the great march of 2,037 men, 127 women, and 57 children across the border of Transvaal on the morning of 6th November 1913. Then came the arrests of Gandhiji, Polak and others. The 'invaders' of Transvaal were all arrested and sentenced, and made to work in the mines. In the meanwhile, the strike-wave spread to other mines. Hardships were heaped upon the Satyagrahis.

At last the position of the Union Government became intolerable and they announced the appointment of a commission to give relief to the Indian community. In the end, in the words of Vincent Sheean, "General Smuts did what every Government that ever opposed Gandhi had to do—he yielded." Gandhiji, Kallenbach, and Polak were released on 18th December 1913. Other prisoners were released within the next few days. By the end of July 1914 the Indian Relief Bill was passed. It repealed the £3 tax, validated

Hindu and Mussalman religious marriages, (only one wife being recognised as legal) and recognised the domicile certificate as conclusive evidence of citizenship.

Thus ended the struggle which was spread over a period of eight long years (1906-1914) and made new history by revolutionizing the method of fighting for social justice.

The story, however brief, would not be complete without a mention of the acts of chivalry which distinguished the conduct of the Satyagrahis during the struggle. In every step that he takes, the Satyagrahi is bound to consider the position of the adversary, says Gandhiji. The opponents' difficulty is never the Satyagrahi's opportunity, and a Satyagrahi would go out of his way to help the opponent in his difficulties. Satyagrahis in South Africa acted up to this precept as the following instances will clearly show:

When labourers in the North Coast went on strike, the planters at Mount Edgecombe would have suffered heavy losses if the sugar-cane that had been cut was not brought to the mills and crushed. So twelve hundred Indians returned to the mills to finish

this piece of work and then resumed the strike.

On another occasion when the Indian employees of the Durban Municipality struck work, those who were engaged in the sanitary services of the Borough or as attendants on the patients in the hospitals were sent back to their duties so that there might be no outbreak of epidemics in the city, and the sick might not suffer.

The most notable example of such chivalry was seen on the occasion of the great strike of the European employees of the Union Railways. The Government was really embarrassed. It was suggested to Gandhiji to join hands and strike the blow which would prove decisive. But Gandhiji refused to do so. It would be contrary to the spirit of Satyagraha, he argued. This decision was very widely appreciated and one of the Secretaries of General Smuts said to Gandhiji, "I do not like your people and do not care to assist them at all. But what am I to do? You help us in our days of need. How can we lay hands upon you? I often wish you took to violence like the English strikers, and then we would know at once how to dispose you off. But you will not injure even the enemy. You desire

victory by self-suffering alone and never transgress your self-imposed limits of courtesy and chivalry. And that is what reduces us to sheer helplessness."

There cannot be a better description of the psychological effect of Satyagraha upon the opponent.

The Satyagraha in South Africa also brings out the important differences between mere passive resistance—which is admittedly the weapon of the weak—and Satyagraha proper, which springs out of unswerving pursuit of truth through love even for the opponent and out of inner strength. Gandhiji in this case insisted that truth and justice were on his side and that he would establish it without ill-will and by self-suffering.

Brute force had absolutely no place in the Indian movement. Whatever their sufferings, Satyagrahis never used nor meant to use physical force though there were occasions when they could have done so effectively. Satyagraha is soul-force pure and simple. While there is no scope for love in passive resistance, hatred is ruled out completely in Satyagraha. Passive resistance can be offered side by side with the use of arms, but Satyagraha eschews violence in any shape or form and at all times. Satyagraha postulates the

conquest of the adversary not by injuring the opponent but by suffering in one's own person.

The story of Satyagraha in South Africa has more than theoretical value and has immense historical interest. Even today throughout the world, there are large masses of men and women suffering from similar disabilities as those of Indians in South Africa and they are all as badly circumstanced. Possibly, they have no other remedy than the one which Gandhiji found out and practised. Men of clay, unarmed and helpless, backward and ignorant, unorganized and undisciplined, heterogeneous as the Indians were, this method breathed new life into them and made them heroes. In his book on *Satyagraha in South Africa* (page 147), Gandhiji says, "My object in writing the present volume is that the nation might know how Satyagraha, for which I live, for which I desire to live and for which I believe I am equally prepared to die, originated and how it was practised on a large scale: and knowing this, it might understand and carry it out to the extent that it is willing and able to do so."



## Law versus Conscience

GANDHIJI was then in South Africa. He was almost prophetic when he wrote in 1908 in reply to Rev. Doke, one of his earliest biographers there, as follows: "The struggle in the Transvaal is not without its interest for India... It (non-violent resistance) may be a slow remedy, but I regard it as an absolutely sure remedy, not only for our ills in Transvaal but for all the political and other troubles from which our people suffer in India." Scarcely could he have then dreamt that after nine years he himself was to initiate the same kind of Satyagraha in India. It was with a halo of success that Gandhiji returned home in 1915. In the beginning, he visited a few places and met some prominent men in India when an opportunity offered itself to him in 1917 to try his new method.

If South Africa served as the field for his first experiment in mass Satyagraha, a district in the province of Bihar proved to be very congenial for trying the novel weapon for the first time on Indian soil. Since then Champaran shot into prominence and has been a name to conjure with during Satyagraha struggles in this land.

The peasants of Champaran were simple folk. They were mere creatures of the soil and knew nothing beyond their daily routine of cultivation. Gandhiji was struck by their appalling ignorance. "He was convinced from the beginning that it was impossible for any outside agency to improve their lot unless their mental and moral condition was improved," thus wrote Dr Rajendra Prasad in 1921, in his book *Satyagraha in Champaran*.

The main dispute was between the tenants and the European Indigo planters who held half the land of the district either as landlords or lessees. Grievances had accumulated for over a century, the root cause being a system under which the tenant was forced to cultivate indigo in a portion of his holding irrespective of whether it was profitable to him or not. Added to

it were the exactions and levies imposed which were feudal in character. Dr Rajendra Prasad mentions forty of such levies, collectively called 'abwabs'. Some of them were very peculiar and archaic. One of them was called 'panikharcha.' It was supposed to be originally irrigation-tax for supply of water. But it continued even when no water was available. 'Marwach' was a tax of rupee one and annas four to be paid by the tenant on the occasion of the marriage of his child. Whenever a planter wanted to buy an elephant, a horse or a motor car, the tenants had to pay a special cess. Tenants who had oil mills, or who sold grain, or kept cows, had to pay extras to the landlords. These forty types of levies were purely arbitrary. And what was more, though illegal, they were enforced at the point of the bayonet. It is true that what Mr E. W. L. Tower, who was at one time the Magistrate of Faridpur, said about Bengal indigo plantations before a Commission in 1860, was equally true of Champaran, namely, "such a system of carrying on Indigo I consider to be a system of bloodshed." Every tenant had not to pay each and every kind of 'abwab' every year no doubt. But some of these were doubtless

realised every year, some on special occasions and some from particular tenants. It was the opinion of Mr J. A. Sweeney, the Settlement Officer, that in the aggregate, the incidence of 'abwab' was equal to the legal rent, that is, every tenant had to pay double the amount he was legally liable to pay.

The main iniquity, however, was the 'tinkathia' system according to which the tenant was under obligations to sow indigo in 3/20th (sometimes 5/20th) of his holding, even when it was not profitable to him. The Hon'ble Mr Maude when moving the Champaran Agrarian Bill of 1917 referred to this system and said, "Now the root of the evil is the 'tinkathia' system under which the ryot is bound either by a contract or as an incident of his tenure to cultivate in indigo a proportion of his land to be selected each year by the (indigo) factory." He said, "The Government alone and that only by legislation can kill the real root of the disease."

Such were the iniquities and vicious systems under which exploitation was going on for decades. Unfortunately the administration instead of coming to the help of the oppressed, most of the time supported

the vested interests. Since 1860 agitation of some kind or other had been going on. Memorials had been sent, representations had been made. Sometimes, out of sheer desperation, there had been some violent outbreaks and also instances of burning of indigo factories. Babu Brijkishore Prasad had moved a resolution in 1915 in the local legislature to appoint a committee of inquiry. But no step had been taken to remove the evil.

It was at the Lucknow session of the Congress in December 1916 that some workers from Bihar moved a resolution and requested Gandhiji who attended the session, to speak on it. Characteristically enough he said he knew nothing of the subject and that unless he made himself acquainted with the situation he would say or do nothing about it. After great pressure by Bihar workers, Gandhiji promised to visit Champaran later and actually arrived in Patna on 10th April 1917. From there he proceeded to Muzaffarpur on his way to Champaran on the 12th of April.

The grievance of the tenants was a very old one. In fact, there had been almost incessant local agitation since 1860. Inquiries by some of the honest

officers had revealed to Government that there was substance in the agitation and the tenants were really hard-hit. Almost every form of so-called constitutional agitation had exhausted itself without bringing any relief. It was a blind wall that confronted the tenants.

It was at this stage that Gandhiji came on the scene with his new method. It was another matter that no occasion arose for him to ask the peasants actually to offer Satyagraha by refusing payment or by refusing to submit to iniquities. In this case, Satyagraha by him alone sufficed to open the gate for the relief of the oppressed peasantry of Bihar.

He went there with an open mind for a personal inquiry which he meant to be quite thorough, honest and open. He pitched his demand also at nothing more than a governmental inquiry which would be open and by an impartial commission. He was not only in constant touch with the government officials and the Planters Association, but kept them informed of his intentions and his plans. He also asked for their help in his inquiry into the causes of the misunderstanding between the peasants and the planters.

His' visit proved unpalatable both to the planters and the government officials. When they learnt that he was proceeding to Champaran they were upset. In fact, the Secretary of the Planters Association advised him by a letter on 12th April 1917 not to proceed to Champaran and that no inquiry was needed. When he intimated the officers with his intentions he was told by the Revenue Commissioner of the division at Muzaffarpur on the 13th of April that inquiry was being made on behalf of the government, that he would not get any assistance and that he should go back at once. Gandhiji was firm and told them all that he had gone there on an invitation from the people and that he would not go back before he had seen things for himself. Along with the copy of a written request which the local workers had sent to him to visit the place, Gandhiji wrote a letter to the officials saying that he was there to find the truth and that was his only object. He said that what he wanted was "peace with honour."

Thus the stage was set for a conflict between Gandhiji, the seeker of truth and the lover of peace

on the one hand, and the exploiters and the authorities on the other.

In the meanwhile, important leaders and workers of the province had arrived at Muzaffarpur. Peasants in hundreds had flocked from the villages. Gandhiji had begun his inquiries. He decided to proceed to Champaran via Motihari the district headquarters on the 15th of April. He told his companions about his experiences in South Africa. He said, when one was sent to jail others followed and the work went on. "I wish that work should be done in the same way here," he added. He expected a warrant of arrest any time.

The party reached Motihari on the 15th of April. Gandhiji wanted to visit some villages round about and he actually went to one which was about nine miles distant. But suddenly a call from the police came and he had to go back to Motihari. On the way he was served with a notice 'to quit' from the District Magistrate who had acted on a note by the Commissioner of the Division. The latter had alleged that Gandhiji's object was likely to be agitation rather than a genuine search for knowledge. The wording of the order was: 'Your presence in any part of the

district will endanger the public peace and may lead to serious disturbance... I do hereby order you to abstain from remaining in the district...' He was further asked to leave the district by the first available train !

To this order under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, Gandhiji replied that the Commissioner had totally misunderstood his position. He added, "Out of a sense of public responsibility, I feel it to be my duty to say that I am unable to leave the district, but if it pleases the authorities, I shall submit to the order by suffering the penalty of disobedience... My desire is purely and simply for a genuine search for knowledge. And this I shall continue to satisfy so long as I am free."

He then held consultations with his colleagues and told them that if it was necessary they should be willing to follow him to jail. His mission then would be certainly successful. He expected to be sent to jail any moment and therefore kept ready detailed written instructions. In the meanwhile, the recording of statements of tenants was going on and he tried to visit as many villages as he could. While doing so,

he intimated to the Magistrate that he intended to do nothing secretly and that it would be better if a police official was sent along with his party.

Manifestly the Magistrate could not sleep over the matter and a summons was sent to Gandhiji to appear in court on the 18th of April to stand his trial for disobedience of the order.

In the meanwhile, Gandhiji had written to a number of friends about the developments. Full information to publicists in Patna had been given. Telegrams and letters were pouring in intimating him with the fact that they were willing to join him in the struggle. Gandhiji was quite happy when two of his co-workers told him that they had decided to continue the work and follow him to jail, if necessary. He said with joy, "Now I know we shall succeed."

Gandhiji appeared before the Magistrate on the 18th of April. Huge crowds of villagers had gathered in the compound of the court. They had instinctively recognised this new leader of theirs. Gandhiji engaged no pleader. He read out a brief statement, the highlights of which were as follows : "I have taken a very serious step of seemingly disobeying the order made

under section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code... I have entered the country with motives of rendering humanitarian and national service... I could not render any help (to tenants) without studying the problem... I feel I could just now serve them only by remaining in their midst. I would not therefore voluntarily retire... The only safe and honourable course for a self-respecting man is...to submit without protest to the penalty of disobedience... I have disregarded the order served upon me not for want of respect for lawful authority, but in obedience to the higher law of our being, the voice of conscience."

The Magistrate seemed to be an unwilling prosecutor and at the last moment he said to Gandhiji, "If you leave the district now and promise not to return, the case against you would be withdrawn." To this he replied, "That cannot be. Not to speak of this time alone, I shall make Champaran my home even after I return from jail." The Magistrate was dumbfounded and said that he would pronounce the judgement at 3 p.m. But afterwards he said he would do it three days later. He requested Gandhiji not to go to the villages during those three days. The latter consented,

but the work of recording statements was continued. Extreme care was taken to record only truthful statements.

The case, however, was withdrawn on the day appointed for judgement!

The news of the trial and Gandhiji's stand and statement reached the four corners of India and also abroad. A number of public men who had gone to Motihari by that time discussed the whole matter and promised Gandhiji to carry on the work even at the risk of prosecution. Gandhiji was overjoyed and felt assured that the work would continue. The peasants were wild with enthusiasm and wherever Gandhiji went, he was warmly welcomed and taken in procession. The planters had already become nervous and they were trying their best to make the government act in their interest. Wherever he went and whatever he did, Gandhiji did openly and informed the planters as well as the government. Ultimately on the 10th of May, Gandhiji was called for an interview by the Hon'ble Mr Maude of the Bihar Government. He submitted a memorandum on 12th May 1918 based on facts recorded

in about 4,000 statements of tenants. He ended by saying, "Believing as I do that ryots are labouring under a grievous wrong from which they ought to be freed immediately, I have dealt as calmly as is possible for me to do so, with the system which the planters are working." Later in June, Gandhiji had an interview with the Lieutenant-Governor of Bihar and on the 13th of that month, a Committee of Inquiry was announced with Gandhiji as one of its members.

It was as a result of the report of that Inquiry Committee that the Champaran Agrarian Bill of 1917 was introduced and passed in the Bihar Legislature.

Gandhiji, however, was not satisfied by merely the removal of economic and political grievances. He was particular about the social and educational uplift of the peasants. Constructive activities have always been a part of his philosophy and technique of Satyagraha. They are now known collectively as the 'Constructive Program.' He started schools in a number of villages and through them served the villagers by spreading education and principles of healthy living. He knew that only those who were inspired with a spirit of service could be helpful to him. While describing the

type of volunteers he required, he wrote, "Their (volunteers') work will be the most important and lasting and therefore it will be the final essential stage of the mission. They have to be grownup, reliable, hardworking men who would not mind taking the spade and repairing and making village roads and cleaning village cess pools and who will, in their dealings with their landlords, guide the ryots aright. Six months of such training cannot fail to do incalculable good to the ryots, the workers and the country at large."

Apart from the actual removal of the dead-weight of oppression by Indigo planters, the moral and other results that followed this campaign by Gandhiji were remarkable. It put new heart into the poor peasants and made them feel that they too had a weapon to fight with, and that they could stand up boldly for their rights. Those who were not even willing for decades to whisper their grievances for fear of chastisement by the cruel servants of the planters, felt bold now to denounce their oppressors to their face. As long ago as 1922, Dr Rajendra Prasad wrote in his book on *Satyagraha in Champaran* as follows: "So

ended the great struggle in Champaran. It is difficult to fully and correctly estimate the effect of Mahatma Gandhi's stay in Champaran. The time has not yet come to write the history of his achievements. The seed which he sowed in Champaran, nay in India, has sprouted, but is yet a sapling ; it will take time to blossom into flower and bear fruit. But if from the greenness of the sapling any estimate can be formed of the sweetness of the fruit to be, then it will have to be said, in all gratefulness, that in no distant future, new life, new thoughts, new aspirations and a new age are going to dawn. The seed of Indian Swaraj has been truly sown in Champaran and the freedom which the poor, helpless down-trodden tenants of Champaran have secured against the educated, ever-vigilant and wealthy planters, living under the protecting wings of the powerful Government, is but a precursor of that larger freedom which Indians, trampled under the heels for centuries, are going to achieve in their struggle for Swaraj. May God hasten that day!"



## The Labourers' Triumph

THE NEXT DRAMA was enacted in Gujarat, the home province of Gandhiji. He had already made Ahmedabad, a big textile centre, his home. He first pitched his Ashram at Kochrab village, a few miles from the city. He later moved to the banks of the Sabarmati very near Ahmedabad, within site of the numerous chimneys of the cotton mills. What specially attracted Gandhiji was the nearness of the site to Sabarmati central jail! He writes, "As jail-going was understood to be the normal lot of Satyagrahis I liked this position."

A big dispute had arisen between the millowners and the labourers of Ahmedabad. Gandhiji's position was delicate as many of the millowners were intimate with him. But in this case the very sister of the leader

of millowners had taken the side of the labourers !

Though the difference between the parties concerned began with the dispute about the grant of a bonus, ultimately the issue revolved round the percentage of dearness allowances. When both the parties approached Gandhiji, he studied the whole case and persuaded them to agree to arbitration. That was done, but unfortunately after a few days some misunderstanding arose amongst some of the mill-hands and they went on strike. This angered the millowners who were waiting for an excuse to get out of the agreement. They declared a lock-out on 22nd February 1918. Gandhiji pleaded with the millowners as well as the workers but to no purpose. He saw that the labourers were, on the whole, in the right. When the lock-out became an accomplished fact, he advised the labourers to demand a 35 per cent increase in the allowance which he considered reasonable. The millowners had, however, decided not to go beyond 20 per cent. Then began a regular strike from the 26th of February in which thousands of labourers were involved.

Gandhiji had advised the labourers to go on strike,

no doubt. But before doing so he had explained to them the conditions of a successful strike: never to resort to violence, never to molest black legs, never to depend upon alms and ever to be firm, come what may. During the strike he had asked them to make honest efforts to win their bread by any kind of labour available.

The labourers had taken a simple oath: They would not go to work in the mills till a 35 per cent increase was given to them on their July pay. They would not create any trouble during the days of lock-out and would observe perfect non-violence. They would not indulge in any assault or looting. They would not harm in any way the property of the mill-owners. They would not allow any indecent words to escape their lips. They would maintain absolute peace.

During the lock-out, Gandhiji kept himself and his co-workers busy. They visited the quarters of the labourers and gave instructions regarding clean and healthy living, and rendered medical aid and other help. Every day educative bulletins were issued for distribution among the labourers. There were also

daily meetings where the day-to-day problems were tackled.

Gandhiji was very strict about monetary help. He did not believe in a campaign run on the strength of money. He exhorted every one to find work for himself and to live on his own earnings. Many were temporarily employed for building the Ashram which was then under construction. At the same time Gandhiji assured the labourers every day that if it should happen that starvation was in prospect, he would starve first, and not they.

The morale of the labourers remained splendid for about a fortnight. In the meantime some of the mill-owners were trying their tricks. Numerous rumours were circulated, and the mill-hands seemed to be wavering and losing morale. It was at that time that Gandhiji took one of those sudden decisions which was at once striking and original. He said he would neither take food nor use a car till he saw the end of it all.

Here are his own words: "Instead of five to ten thousand blooming faces full of the lustre of iron

determination, I saw but a thousand or two who seemed worn out and dejected... I am one of those who believe that one has to stick to his vow in any circumstances. I cannot even for a moment tolerate the idea that you should violate the solemn pledge you have taken. Till such time as you would all get your 35 per cent increment or you are all completely defeated in your object, I am not going to touch my food nor am I riding a car." The fast continued only for three days.

This turned the scales. The labourers again became adamant. The fast brought an indirect pressure on the millowners and Gandhiji said that to that extent it had an element of coercion in it. But he said that he could not help it as that was the only remedy he could devise for saving the labourers from a fall.

It was finally decided, after 21 days of strike, that Prof. Dhruva should act as the sole arbitrator. After a period of three months he decided that an increment of 35 per cent on their July pay should be given to the mill-hands.

In this case, Gandhiji's active non-violence that is his love for the cause of the mill-hands of Ahmedabad,

was so intense that he risked his own life for it. After about a fortnight's struggle, when he took to fasting and thus maintained the morale of the labourers and hastened the settlement, Miss Ferring, a Danish lady in a telegram to Gandhiji said, "Greater love knoweth no man than that he layeth down his life for the sake of his fellowmen."

Gandhiji remarked at the end of the struggle, that there was no place for hatred or ill-will in it and that he was as much the servant of the millowners as of the labourers. Shri Mahadev Desai who has written a small book in Gujarati on this struggle, called *Dharmayuddha*, has characterized the strike as one conducted with the cleanest means, on the strength of sheerest determination, and with the least bitterness on either side. The result too was beneficial to both the parties.

The work thus begun among the labourers of Ahmedabad has continued to this day and the Textile Labour Union of Ahmedabad is one of the most closely-knit organizations in the country. It works along the lines laid down by Gandhiji.



## The Peasant Stands Up

EVEN WHILE the labour struggle in Ahmedabad was on, Gandhiji had already taken up the cause of the peasants in the Kheda district of Gujarat. It was a very bad year for the ryots of that district. The rains had failed miserably and yet the government did not heed to the cries of the peasants and refused to suspend the revenue collections till next year. Gandhiji went to their rescue. He was quite at home with them as he was with Ahmedabad labourers. He could speak in their own mother-tongue and they felt natural kinship with him. This helped both during the campaign. Another great gain was the discovery of Shri Vallabhbhai Patel. If Champaran brought to the fore Shri Rajendra Prasad, at present the President of the Constituent Assembly of India, the Kheda struggle

threw up Shri Vallabhbhai Patel, now called Sardar Patel, the Deputy Prime Minister of India.

In Champaran, Gandhiji was able to achieve results comparatively easily. No necessity arose for the peasants themselves to offer Satyagraha. In Kheda, they had to launch a regular 'no-revenue' campaign with all the sacrifices such a movement involves. This happened in 1918.

The district of Kheda or Kaira is in Gujarat. The crops had failed and semi-famine conditions prevailed. The peasants were unable to pay the assessment for the year. They were entitled to a suspension of the tax under the rules which laid down that if the peasants could harvest only one-fourth of the normal yield, they should be relieved from the obligation of paying the assessment that year. This relief is technically called 'suspension of revenue' for the year. But the Government refused to grant this legitimate relief. Petitions, representations, and resolutions in the Provincial Legislative Council were of no avail.

Gandhiji appeared on the scene. After studying the situation, he advised the people to withhold payment. The people responded nobly and took an oath that

they would rather allow their land to be confiscated according to law than pay what was not rightly due. Even those who could afford to pay refused to do so in sympathy with their poorer brethren.

Gandhiji put before the public and the Government the peasant's case and appealed for justice. He enlisted volunteers to work in the district and keep up the morale of the peasants. Shri Vallabhbhai Patel, then a rising barrister in Ahmedabad, joined the struggle.

A systematic political education of the peasantry began. Their fear of officialdom was wiped away. They were taught that officials were really people's servants and they had no business to order them about. This inspired the peasants to stand up against the officials and defy threats of coercion and intimidation. The peasants, however, were asked to be civil in the face of the gravest provocation. They faced with equanimity all attachments of their property and notices for forfeiture of their land.

An occasion for civil disobedience of law was also provided by the Government. An onion-field was attached. The attachment was bad in law. So Gandhiji

advised one Mohanlal Pandya and some seven or eight of his followers to reap the crop in spite of attachment. They did so, and were arrested and imprisoned. This only strengthened the morale of the people and all fear of imprisonment disappeared.

When the officials saw that the people refused to yield, they began to beat a hasty retreat, but without openly announcing any concession for or negotiating with the peasants. They ceased to press those who were unable to pay. An official circular was sent to revenue collectors to that effect. The attachments and notices stopped. Thus they tacitly recognized the contention of the people that relief should be granted to those who were unable to pay.

In principle, the Satyagraha was successful but it lacked the essentials of a complete triumph. The Government did not meet in full the demand of the peasants, but by partial relief satisfied some of them. The people did not feel the glow of immediate success nor did they realize the benefit they had gained. Gandhiji remarked that "the end is worthy only when it leaves the Satyagrahis stronger and more spirited than in the beginning." He saw that the people felt

frustrated and dejected and that they were not civil enough towards the authorities. Moreover, the Government had succeeded in dividing the ranks of the people by discrimination in realizing the assessment.

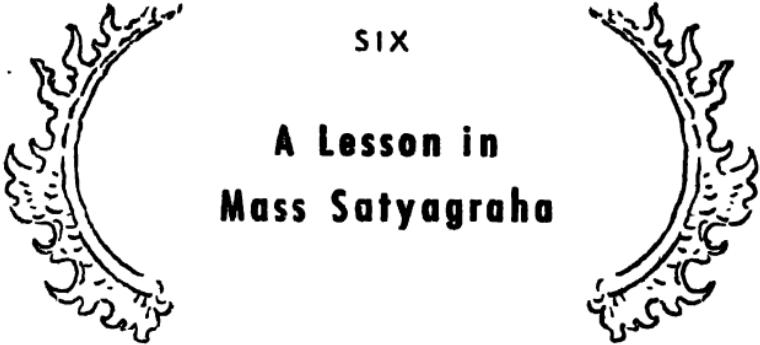
But the indirect results that followed were more valuable. There was widespread awakening among the peasantry in Gujarat. In fact, they shed their fear and lethargy and learnt the lesson of self-reliance and self-confidence. For the first time they realized that they had certain fundamental rights which they could enforce by peaceful mass action.

Referring to this campaign Gandhiji says in his autobiography: "The lesson was indelibly imprinted on the public mind that the salvation of the people depends upon themselves, upon their capacity for suffering and sacrifice. Through the Kheda campaign, Satyagraha took firm root in the soil of Gujarat."

It was the first occasion when at Gandhiji's call the masses of India faced hardships and sufferings and when he educated them on the lines of Satyagraha. They learnt the lesson and suffered cheerfully.

After the campaign, Gandhiji saw the necessity of training volunteers to educate the ryots in the

science of Satyagraha and he also felt that the constructive aspect of Satyagraha had not yet become sufficiently attractive to the people, though it was as important or even more.



## A Lesson in Mass Satyagraha

A NO-TAX CAMPAIGN taxes the capacity of the people to suffer more than any other kind of mass movement. All the property movable and immovable, cattle, even living houses, if they are on the land, are liable to be attached and forfeited for non-payment of land revenue, according to the current law in the province of Bombay. Moreover, men, women and children all get involved when the whole area is in the grip of a campaign. Fines, imprisonments follow in the wake. An exasperated executive takes to illegal ways and means also, though all such things are in excess of the authority of the law.

Bardoli witnessed and withstood all such suffering. It was a marvel of peaceful organization as well. For a time the Government writ ceased to run in the

taluka. Even the Government officials had to seek peasants' permits to get their rations! The Satyagraha campaign of the Bardoli peasants in 1928 was indeed an epic struggle.

The issues involved were of utmost importance to the whole of the ryotwari area where there is peasant proprietorship. The bureaucracy of Bombay Government applied all its force to crush the movement and yielded only when they saw that it was impossible to suppress the spirit of the people.

If all had gone well in 1922 when the first non-co-operation movement was in full swing, Bardoli Taluka would have been the scene of the fiercest struggle and an area where all the items of the non-co-operation program including no-tax would have been put into practice. Gandhiji had chosen it for that purpose. But the Chauri Chaura violence in the United Provinces, deprived Bardoli of that honour. Gandhiji said 'halt' in the face of the violence. But later, in 1928, Bardoli fulfilled its destiny, for in that year, it launched the momentous no-tax campaign which is a landmark in the history of Satyagraha.

The Government of Bombay revises once in 30

years, the assessment on land in every Taluka. Mostly revision means an increase in the assessment. In the case of the neighbouring two talukas of Bardoli and Chorasi, they raised it by 30 per cent. Early protests brought down the percentage of the increase to 22, but the peasants challenged even this decision and demanded that an open inquiry should be held, before there was any enhancement in the revenue. The Government did not heed the protests.

After much patient deliberation the peasants took the plunge. They held conferences and passed resolutions and gave due notice of their intention to withhold payment in case the Government stuck to its decision.

The population of the Taluka numbered about 88,000 and the revenue demand according to the new scale was about Rs. 6,27,000. Gandhiji studied the situation and blessed the struggle. At the request of the peasants Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel took up the leadership. He infused in them the determination to carry on the campaign to the bitter end. The struggle started in grim earnest.

Fortunately, Shri Mahadev Desai has given a full

account of this struggle in his *Story of Bardoli*. Some of the facts are recounted here in outline.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel organized the Taluka with perfect thoroughness. For several years there had been four or five Social Service centres in the different parts of the Taluka, which were carrying on constructive activities. On the framework of these, sixteen new camps were organized in convenient centres and 250 volunteers were put in charge. Definite duties were assigned to them. The whole atmosphere of the Taluka was changed into that of an armed camp. Fighting, sacrifice, fearlessness, defiance were on the lips of every one. Bulletins both for news and instructions were issued every day. A pledge to remain strictly non-violent and surfer to the utmost and cheerfully lose all was taken by the peasants. The crucial decision was taken when a representative conference at Bardoli resolved that the revision settlement was arbitrary, unjust, and oppressive and called upon all land-holders to refuse payment of the revised assessment until the Government was prepared to accept the amount of the old assessment in full satisfaction of their dues or until the Government appointed an impartial tribunal

to settle the whole question of revision by investigation and inquiry on the spot. This was on 12th February 1928.

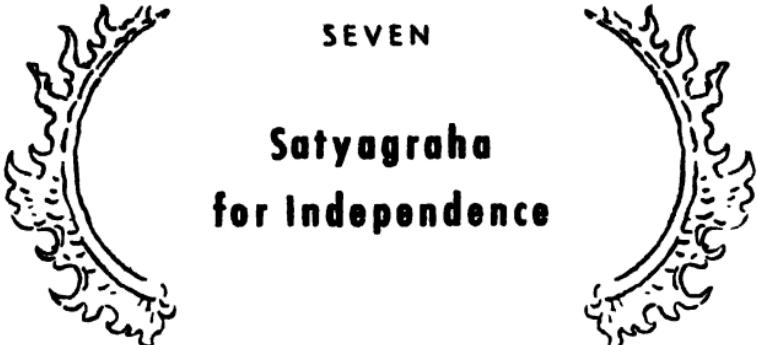
Men, women and children ready to make all the sacrifices that Satyagraha might call for, thronged at meetings held by the Sardar. The whole Taluka was electrified in a few days and the atmosphere was that of the old days of 1922.

The Government tried its best to compel payment. It tried flattery, bribery, threats, fines, imprisonment, forfeiture, and lathi-charges. It attempted to divide the communities. Property on a large scale was attached and sold for a song to outsiders as no local buyer came forward. They attached about 1,400 acres of land and sold it by auction. Pathans were employed to threaten people and create an atmosphere of fear. But all this only infused more solidarity in the Taluka. A strong social boycott was imposed on all Government representatives and against those who bought the attached property. But physical necessities were never denied even to the opponents.

The whole of India sympathized with the struggle and looked with admiration on the heroes of Bardoli.

Women, no less than men, took part in the struggle. Several members of the Legislature resigned as a protest against the repressive policy of the Government. The matter was also discussed in the Parliament. The peasants stood firm and non-violent. After five and a half months' struggle, the Government yielded and the Governor appointed a committee of inquiry. All property that had been attached was restored and village officers who had resigned were reinstated. The Committee found that the complaints of the peasants were substantially true and instead of 22 per cent, they recommended only a  $6\frac{1}{4}$  per cent increment.

This campaign demonstrated beyond doubt the efficacy of the weapon of Satyagraha. The ryots' cause was just, their case unassailable, and their method non-violent. At the close of the historic struggle Shrimati Sarojini wrote to Gandhiji: "Your dream was to make Bardoli the perfect example of Satyagraha (in 1922) and Bardoli has fulfilled itself in its own fashion by interpreting and perfecting your dream."



## Satyagraha for Independence

IN THE FOREGOING CHAPTERS I have given outlines of some of the most important peaceful mass movements. None of them were on an all-India scale though they evoked deep interest throughout the land. I am now giving brief sketches of six movements all of which comprehended the whole of India. I am summing them up in a single chapter here as they have some common features. It is impossible to give in this booklet any details of even a single one of them. Every one of them now is a part of India's history and has contributed in winning independence.

The struggle for independence was a continuous process and when Gandhiji assumed leadership in 1919, he led the country step by step and from strength to strength. Each of the Satyagraha movements I have

referred to here was of all-India magnitude, and one led to the other like tidal waves of a rising sea. Thus they were like links in the long chain running from 1919 to 1944. They were all entirely conceived, initiated and led by Gandhiji himself and may be said to be collectively responsible for achieving the result. And yet each one was different from the other in many ways. Each was a response to the particular circumstances obtaining at the time. In this matter Gandhiji acted like a master-artist who expresses some basic ideas in a variety of forms. Tolstoy is said to have referred to Gandhiji's South African struggle as of world-wide importance. One need not say how much more important were the movements in India which ultimately bestowed freedom on this big country. Rightly did Gandhiji declare in his broadcast to America from Kingsley Hall, London, in 1931 as follows : "The reason for the struggle, which has drawn the attention of the world, does not lie in the fact that we Indians are fighting for our liberty, but in the fact that the means adopted by us have not been adopted by any other people of whom we have a record. The means adopted are not bloodshed, not

violence, nor diplomacy as one understands it nowadays. They are purely and simply Truth and Non-violence."

These six movements which were sponsored during a total period of twenty-five years (6th April 1919 to 5th May 1944) were operative for six years, eight months and two days. Active and sustained resistance was maintained during four years and eleven months. Two of these campaigns were such that only select individuals were asked to offer civil disobedience. The other four were mass campaigns in which lakhs of men, women and even children took part and observed the discipline of non-violence under very trying circumstances.

#### 1: ROWLATT ACT SATYAGRAHA 1919

IN ESSENCE, this was a call only to pledged individuals to disobey particular laws which were repugnant, for instance, the repressive press laws then current in India, as a protest against the passing (3rd March 1919) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, otherwise known as the Rowlatt Act. On the Government trying to suppress the movement, it assumed

mass proportions and thousands defied the orders passed by local magistracy.

Having co-operated effectively in World War I, India expected at the War's end to receive a generous instalment of self-government. But instead, there came the Rowlatt Bills which sought to curtail and crush the civic rights of Indians. The Rowlatt report on sedition and revolutionary crime in India was published on January 19, 1919, and the bills were introduced in the Supreme Legislative Council on February 6. Gandhiji announced on February 24 that he would lead a movement of Satyagraha if the bills were passed into law. Bill No. 2 was dropped but Bill No. 1, called the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act, was passed on March 3, 1919. While the bills were pending, Gandhiji toured the country and issued statements. A Satyagraha Committee was set up and Gandhiji drew up a pledge on March 18. The pledge characterised the bills as unjust, subversive of the principles of liberty and justice, destructive of the elementary rights of an individual on which the safety of India as a whole and of the State itself, was based.

In his manifesto issued on 28th February 1919,

Gandhiji said, "The step taken is probably the most momentous in the history of India... The Indian Covenanters (pledged Satyagrahis) by their determination to undergo every form of suffering make an irresistible appeal to the Government towards which they bear no ill-will, and provide to the believers in the efficacy of violence as a means of securing redress of grievances, with an infallible remedy, and withal a remedy that blesses those that use it and also those against whom it is used... The Covenanters have convinced themselves that the disease is serious enough and that milder measures have utterly failed."

March 30 was fixed as the date for launching Satyagraha, but the date was later changed to April 6. Unfortunately, the news of change did not reach Delhi and some other places in time, so those places observed March 30 as Satyagraha Day. In his statement regarding Satyagraha Day, Gandhiji said, "Satyagraha is essentially a religious movement. It is a process of purification and penance. It seeks to secure reforms or redress of grievances by self-suffering. The sixth of April ... should be observed as a day of humiliation and prayer."

The details of the program were as follows: (1) A twenty-four hours' fast should be observed, but not as a hunger-strike to put any pressure on Government. The fast should be regarded as necessary discipline to fit Satyagrahis for Civil Disobedience. For others it would be regarded as a token of the intensity of their wounded feelings. (2) Suspension of all work on Satyagraha Day. (3) Public meetings should be held and resolutions passed for the withdrawal of the Rowlatt Act. This was the program for the general public.

There was a special program for the pledged Satyagrahis. They were asked by the Satyagraha Committee to disobey civilly the law applying to prohibited literature and registration of newspapers. Gandhiji himself issued an unregistered newspaper called *Satyagrahi* and published it on April 7, 1919. It was just a half-sheet and contained among other things instructions to Satyagrahis about how they should face imprisonment, fine, attachment of property, and the like without evasion and without defence.

The response was good throughout India. In most places there were peaceful hartals, accompanied by

fasting and prayer. Millions took part in the program. Unfortunately, in some centres there were clashes between police and demonstrators. In Delhi there was firing by the police, with five dead and several wounded. The situation in the Punjab rapidly deteriorated, culminating in the Jallianwalla Bagh tragedy, when General Dyer shot down, according to Government reports, four hundred helpless, unarmed people and wounded about a thousand. Martial law, many atrocities and a series of humiliating acts perpetrated by the military and civil authorities followed. Public floggings, crawling orders, summary trials went on.

Gandhiji, realizing that mob-violence had broken out, suspended the Satyagraha movement on April 18. He issued a statement saying: "I have greater faith in Satyagraha today than before. It is my perception of the law of Satyagraha which impels me to suggest the suspension... I understand the forces of evil... Satyagraha had nothing to do with the violence of the mob at Ahmedabad and Viramgaon. Satyagraha was neither the cause nor the occasion of the upheaval. If anything, the presence of Satyagraha has acted as a

check... The events in the Punjab are unconnected with the Satyagraha movement... Our Satyagraha must, therefore, now consist in ceaselessly helping the authorities in all the ways available to us as Satyagrahis to restore order and curb lawlessness... We must fearlessly spread the doctrine of Satya and Ahimsa and then and not till then, shall we be able to undertake mass Satyagraha..."

On July 21, 1919, Gandhiji issued another statement in which he said that on account of indications of good will on the part of Government and advice from many of his friends, he would not resume civil disobedience, as it was not his purpose to embarrass the Government. He called upon Satyagrahis to carry on propaganda for the use of pure Swadeshi materials and for Hindu-Muslim unity.

The fate of the Rowlatt Act, however, for the withdrawal of which the movement had been launched, had already been sealed. One of the bills never became law, and the one which became law never came into force. The objective of the campaign was achieved.

## 2: NON-VIOLENT NON-CO-OPERATION

HARDLY HAD ONE YEAR passed after the Satyagraha against Rowlatt Bills in April 1919, when the Hunter Committee Report was published. It indemnified the officers concerned and whitewashed the actions of those who were responsible for the massacres of Jallianwala Bagh and atrocities of the Punjab.

Another grievance especially concerning the Muslims of India served as an additional insult. They had been promised by the British Prime Minister during the war that Turkey would be given such terms as would keep the Khalifate inviolate. That did not happen as evidenced by the terms of treaty which were published on 20th May 1920. These clubbed together as the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs were the cause of the next Satyagraha campaign that Gandhiji launched. It took the form of non-violent non-co-operation this time and was declared on 1st August 1920.

In his manifesto issued on 10th March, there were already clear indications that non-co-operation was imminent. "Now a word as to what may be done if the demands are not granted. The barbarous method is

warfare open or secret. This must be ruled out if only because it is impracticable... Non-co-operation therefore is the only remedy left open to us. It is the cleanest remedy as it is the most effective, when it is absolutely free from violence. Voluntary withdrawal (of all help to Government) alone is the test of popular feeling and dissatisfaction..." said Gandhiji.

While writing about the beginning of the second nation-wide Satyagraha, he wrote in *Young India* of 28th July 1920: "The first of August will be as important an event in the history of India as was the 6th of April last year. The 6th of April marked the beginning of the end of the Rowlatt Act... The power that wrests justice from an unwilling Government... is the power of Satyagraha, whether it is known by the name of civil disobedience or non-co-operation... As in the past, the commencement is to be marked by fasting and prayer... suspension of business and by meetings to pass resolutions praying for the revision of peace terms and justice for the Punjab, and for inculcating non-co-operation until justice has been done. The giving up of titles is to begin from that day.... But the greatest thing is to organize and evolve

order and discipline." He again stressed the necessity of absolute non-violence. He told the people, "I say do not return madness with madness, but return madness with sanity and the whole situation will be yours."

The Khilafat Committee had already accepted non-co-operation on 28th May 1920 and the special session of the Congress accepted it on 4th September 1920.

The movement was called progressive non-violent non-co-operation. In the first place, there was the five-fold boycott of titles and honours, of elections and legislatures, of schools and colleges, of courts and tribunals and of foreign cloth. There was also a constructive side to it. National schools and institutions were to be started, arbitration courts and Panchayats were to be established, spinning on charkhas was to begin. Then Government levees, durbars and all semi-official or official functions were to be boycotted, sale and use of drinks and drugs were to be prevented through peaceful picketing. People were asked not to offer themselves as recruits for civil or military service.

Never before was the country so awakened, so

active, so united and so determined as during the eventful months of 1921-22. Hindus and Muslims seemed to have been welded into a single community. The movement which began with a simple hartal, fasting, and prayer spread like wild fire. The masses took up the campaign of prohibition spontaneously and tried to enforce it through peaceful picketing. There was some sporadic mob-violence, but on the whole, the campaign was non-violent, vigorous and effective. National schools sprang up by hundreds. The Congress membership went up to fifty lakhs. The Tilak Swaraj Fund was over-subscribed and went up to 115 lakhs. About 20 lakhs of charkhas began to ply in India.

On its part, the Government was effecting arrests on a large scale. No effective workers were spared. In the United Provinces and Bengal, the volunteer organizations were declared unlawful and mass arrests for civil disobedience became the order of the day.

When the Congress met in December 1921 more than 30,000 Congress workers were in jail. Congress in turn decided to enrol 50,000 new volunteers, pledged to non-violence. Gandhiji was preparing to

launch an extensive no-tax campaign in Bardoli early in 1922, when the murder of some twenty police constables and a sub-inspector in Chauri-Chaura, coupled with riots attending the visit of the Prince of Wales, led him to induce the Working Committee of the Congress to suspend mass civil disobedience in favour of a comprehensive constructive program. He himself was arrested on March 10 and sentenced to six years' imprisonment for seditious writing. He pleaded guilty and said that it was his duty to preach disaffection and also requested the court to award the fullest penalty.

Although the immediate objectives of the 1920-22 campaign were not gained, the indirect gains were invaluable. Gandhiji declared that in that period the country had advanced by at least thirty years, if not more. The Governor of Bombay is reported to have remarked that the movement was within an inch of success.

### 3: CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE FOR SWARAJ 1930-31

THE NEXT STEP was civil disobedience not for

the removal of any specific grievances but for Swaraj itself. Although the years 1924-29 were years of constructive activity on the part of the Congress, there was a growing feeling, particularly among youth, that the time was ripe for a declaration of Indian Independence. Hitherto, Congress had talked in terms of Dominion Status, but at the December 1927 session, a resolution was passed declaring "the goal of the Indian people to be complete independence." As a countermove to the unwanted and boycotted all-white Simon Commission on political reforms (1928-29), Congress appointed its own Committee to draw up a Dominion Status constitution for India ; this was adopted by the All Parties Conference held at Lucknow at the end of 1928. The Calcutta session of the Congress, December 1928, undertook to adopt the constitution recommended by the All Parties Conference, provided it was accepted by the British Parliament in its present form before December 31, 1929. But in case it was rejected, the Congress would be free to organize a campaign of non-violent non-co-operation, to advise the country to refuse taxes, and to carry on civil disobedience in such other manner

as might be decided upon. Government paid no heed to this resolution, and hence the Lahore Session of the Congress, December 1929, changed the Congress creed from Dominion Status to Complete Independence. It instructed Congress members of the legislatures to resign and the people to take no part in the elections. It appealed to the nation "zealously to prosecute the constructive program of the Congress" and authorized the All India Congress Committee to launch a program of civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes, whenever it saw fit. This was the formal beginning of the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930.

The Working Committee of the Congress decided to observe January 26, 1930, as Independence Day throughout the country, and in February authorized Gandhiji to start civil disobedience in the manner he thought best. It said that civil disobedience for the purpose of obtaining complete independence should be initiated and controlled only by those who believed in non-violence as an article of faith.

Gandhiji opened the campaign with his dramatic march from Sabarmati to Dandi for the purpose of

breaking the Salt Laws. The 200 mile foot journey was completed on April 5, and on April 6, Gandhiji picked up a pinch of untaxed salt and broke the law. The All India campaign was on. Though Gandhiji was arrested on May 4, leadership of the campaign passed to a succession of others—each relinquishing command as he was led to jail. Salt raids continued, and the repressive measures of Government became more and more severe. India became a vast prison-house.

During this movement, the lathi was brought into full play by the police and the number of firings that took place in a number of towns showed that the Government was trying to deal with the situation in a ruthless manner.

Mass raids on salt works and depots at different places in three or four provinces were a special feature during this movement. The Dharasana raid was witnessed by a number of foreign correspondents and by impartial observers in India. The volunteers there wrote new history with their blood. The marvellous endurance and discipline of the non-violent raiders at Dharasana and Wadala drew unstinted and unqualified

praise from eminent foreigners like Mr Brailsford and Mr Slocombe. On the 21st of May, 2,500 volunteers raided the salt pans at Dharasana. Two hundred and ninety were injured by lathi charges. Two of them subsequently died. Fifteen thousand people, volunteers and non-volunteers raided the Wadala pans. About 150 were injured by lathis. At Sanikatta ten to fifteen thousand people, in a mass, raided the salt depot and carried away hundreds of maunds of salt. But the point in a Satyagraha raid is not the amount of material removed but the bold, defiant, open action resorted to by the masses without the idea of using violence or counter violence, but with a clear idea about the suffering involved and of the right vindicated.

Mr Webb Miller of *New Freeman* wrote about Dharasana as follows: "During eighteen years of reporting... I have never witnessed such harrowing scenes as at Dharasana. Sometimes the scenes were so painful that I had to turn away momentarily. One surprising feature was the discipline of the volunteers. It seemed they were thoroughly imbued with Gandhi's non-violent creed." There was not a single case of

retaliation or counter violence or even cursing. And this went on for days.

Though people showed such exemplary patience and conducted themselves quite non-violently, the police and the military acted most brutally and inhumanly against unarmed thousands that were ready to sacrifice themselves and shed their blood for their country. Many times even the innocent spectators were hit hard and hundreds of them were injured.

During the whole year a number of ordinances were promulgated. Lathi charges and belabouring by police became the order of the day. During the months of April and May alone, firing was resorted to at nineteen places killing 111 and injuring 422. But the people kept calm and suffered without violence on their side. Women in large numbers took part in this movement and persisted in spite of very harsh treatment.

In the meantime, attempts were being made to negotiate a settlement. Some of them were by Mr Slocombe, Shri Sapru, Shri Jayakar and Mr Horace Alexander, but all of them failed. The Round Table Conference, which had been convened in spite of the

happenings in India, helped to speed Gandhiji's release. On January 26, 1931, Gandhiji and twenty-six colleagues came out of jail to begin negotiations which ultimately resulted in the Gandhi-Irwin Pact of March 5, 1931. Mutual good will on the part of Lord Irwin and Gandhiji was responsible for the successful termination of the negotiations. The pact was a moral victory for the Congress and its principle of non-violence. But Government parted with no real political power. The pact offered a breathing spell rather than a real peace.

The 1930-31 movement lasted a complete year. Nationalist India waged a relentless struggle, facing hardship and losses cheerfully, with no thought of resorting to violence. The British Government, armed to the teeth with all modern weapons, sought to crush the spirit of India with ordinances, the lathi and other methods of terrorism. The main forms of Satyagraha current during the struggle were civil breach of Salt Laws, non-violent raids on salt pans and depots, breach of the ordinances, no-tax campaigns in certain parts of the country, civil breach of the press laws, boycott of foreign articles, special boycott

of British cloth and British concerns, general non-co-operation with Government, and boycott of the legislatures. The campaign marked a distinct moral victory, which created self-confidence among the people and confidence in the weapon of Satyagraha. The pact that came at the end led the way to Congress participation in the Round Table Conference.

#### 4: CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE FOR SWARAJ 1932-34

THIS WAS really a continuance of the struggle begun in 1930 with a break of nine months during which Gandhiji attended the Round Table Conference in London without any success.

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact, which was signed on 5th March 1931, was broken almost before the ink was dry. Lord Willingdon, who had succeeded Lord Irwin as Viceroy, was in no mood for compromise. When Gandhi returned from England from the Round Table Conference, he found India under Ordinance-Raj, with leading Congressmen under arrest. Although Gandhiji endeavoured to present the Congress point of view, the Viceroy was unyielding and Civil Dis-

obedience had to be resumed. Gandhiji, and some fifteen thousand other prominent Congressmen throughout India, were picked up and arrested and detained without trial. Congress property was seized and Congress and allied organizations declared unlawful. Ordinance rule was the order of the day, with the lathi and baton very much in evidence. Soon the jails in the country were filled to capacity, with more than a hundred thousand prisoners. Repression was thorough and ruthless.

On 12th September 1932, the country suddenly heard the news that Gandhiji was going to fast unto death over the question of the Communal Award, which had proposed separate electorates for the Harijans. Gandhiji commenced the fast on September 20, and broke it when the Poona Pact, which restored joint electorates to the Harijans, was signed on the 26th. Civil disobedience was continuing, but the removal of untouchability came to receive more serious attention. Ultimately, after a meeting of Congress workers in Poona on 12th July 1933, mass civil disobedience was given up and only individual civil disobedience continued. Attempts at reconciliation

with Government failed. On 7th April 1934, all civil disobedience was suspended.

### 5: INDIVIDUAL SATYAGRAHA 1940-41

1934-39 was a period during which the Congress decided to enter the legislatures and at the same time to carry on constructive activities among the masses. 1939 September saw the coming of the Second World War. Britain declared war on behalf of India as well without consulting her. That gave occasion to the Congress legislators to resign their seats.

Individual Satyagraha campaign was a type by itself. The life and death struggle in which England was engaged and the general non-embarrassment policy followed by the Congress decided the form of Satyagraha. Gandhiji in his speech initiating the movement said that the virtue of waiting was becoming a vice. Several alternatives had been suggested to Britain. It was asked to declare Indian independence but that question was evaded. It was asked to give India a constitution framed by a Constituent Assembly. The idea was laughed out. Full armed co-operation was offered if India was recognised as free. That was reject-

ed. The exercise of restraint was good so long as it helped the spirit to live but it turned into a vice as soon as it threatened to kill the very spirit. He said, "I am not only speaking for the Congress but for all who stand for national freedom, unadulterated independence. I should be untrue to all of them if I said now: 'No embarrassment to the British...' therefore, if I exercised that self-suppression at this critical moment, it should be suicidal." He further said, "We cannot sit still. It is not Satyagraha to watch the people being marched to jail in the exercise of their right to freedom of speech. If we looked on, the Congress would disappear and with it the national spirit."

Gandhiji hit upon individual Satyagraha as the most appropriate method of expressing its dissatisfaction. It was the contention of the Congress that India should be free "to carry on non-violently and openly anti-war propaganda" and "to preach non-co-operation with the Government in their war effort."

Gandhiji interviewed the Viceroy on September 27 and 30, 1940. But the Viceroy could not concede his demand for freedom to preach the war policy of the Congress in a non-violent manner, or to tell people

not to help the war effort, on the grounds that all war was evil and destructive in nature. The Viceroy said that he would allow the same freedom that was given to conscientious objectors in Britain to Congressmen in India, but could go no further.

Then followed the inauguration of the Satyagraha campaign. Gandhiji laid down very strict rules and drew up a pledge. He wanted "quality" on this occasion. The campaign was opened at Paunar, October 17, 1940, when Vinoba Bhave, selected by Gandhiji for this honour, made a public speech in which he preached the Congress war policy and exhorted the people not to help the war effort, as all war was immoral and bad. He was arrested after he had been making speeches for four days and sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

Gandhiji then directed chosen Congressmen to march on foot towards Delhi, explaining the Congress war policy as they went. Hundreds started, but many were arrested and sentenced before leaving the bounds of their own provinces.

Later Gandhiji prescribed that instead of speeches and statements, satyagrahis should repeat a slogan

that it was wrong to help the British war effort with men and money and that non-violence was the best way of resisting all wars. On this issue about thirty thousand people courted jail. It is significant that most of the Congress representatives in the Legislatures, Central and Provincial, in District Boards and Municipalities, in Congress organizations, and in public life found themselves in jail in this campaign. Eleven members of the Working Committee, 176 members of the All India Congress, 29 ex-Ministers, 22 members of the Central Legislature and 400 of the Provincial Legislatures courted jail. This campaign continued until the end of 1941, when the imminent invasion of India by the Japanese led Government to release the Satyagrahis in an attempt to secure co-operation in the war effort.

## 6: QUIT INDIA 1942-44

IN DECEMBER 1941, Japanese planes swooped on Pearl Harbour and forced America into the war. The soldiers of Nippon, however, marched with incredible speed and stepped from island to island in the Pacific. They were marching across Burma and

Japanese bombs had already fallen on Indian soil. The prestige of the British was at its lowest.

It was at this time that Sir Stafford Cripps brought his proposals to India which were rejected by all parties because they had no substance. Cripps left India angered and bitter, and anti-British feeling ran the highest. Gandhiji saw that the parting of ways had come if India were to defend herself. She must free herself from the enervating influence of British Imperialism, that was his feeling. He had no objection to the armies of United Nations being here but he said that it must be with the consent of Free India.

In July 1942, the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution calling upon Britain to withdraw from India. The resolution said that if the appeal failed, Congress would then be reluctantly compelled to utilize all its non-violent strength for the vindication of the political rights and the liberty of India, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The All India Congress Committee, meeting in Bombay, August 7 and 8, endorsed this action, resolving "to sanction for the vindication of India's inalienable right to freedom and independence, the starting of a mass

struggle on the widest possible scale, so that the country might utilize all the non-violent strength it has gathered during the last 22 years of peaceful struggle." It declared that such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji.

Before the next day dawned, Gandhiji and all the Working Committee members were arrested. Within a week everyone who mattered in the Congress organization was in jail. Then followed rule by ordinances, firings, lathi charges—even bombings from airplanes were reported from some places. At some centres people, driven to desperation, retorted in kind, attacking railways and the police. Government reported that 56 people succumbed to mob fury. It is estimated that more than 2,000 unarmed and innocent people were shot down and about 6,000 were injured by the police and military. Tens of thousands were wounded by lathis, about 150,000 jailed, and about a million and a half of rupees were imposed as collective fines. There is no record of tortures, burning of houses, looting, and other atrocities by the police and the military.

This struggle, which continued to 5th May 1944,

was truly remarkable and incomparable with anything in past history. The few acts of unorganized violence can detract in no way from the mass awakening and mass revolt witnessed throughout India and the predominantly non-violent manner in which the masses conducted themselves. What shape the movement would have taken in Gandhiji's hands is a matter for conjecture. But even without his guidance, or without the guidance of any top-rank leader, the struggle continued unrelentingly and paved the way for final victory. The Quit India Campaign will ever remain an important chapter in the history of non-violent resistance, if not of pure Satyagraha.

## Glossary

*A.I.C.C.* : All India Congress Committee is the deliberative standing committee of the Congress elected by its delegates annually.

*Ashram* : Originally a hermitage. It usually means a home where workers devoted to social, religious or political service live together and observe a particular discipline.

*Charkha* : A spinning wheel.

*Communal Award* : Award given by Mr Ramsay Macdonald when Premier in 1932, as regards the political rights of major and minor communities in India.

*Congress* : The Indian National Congress, the premier and the most powerful political organization in India. It is in existence for the last 64 years.

*Congress Working Committee* : The Executive of the Congress consisting of about fifteen members.

*Dharmayuddha* : A righteous struggle. A religious war, a crusade.

*Indentured (labourer)* : Labourer who has entered into a contract for a stipulated period.

*Khilafat* : The Khalif is the spiritual head of the Mussalmans. Khilafat is that which pertains to him.

*Lakh* : 100,000.

*Raj* : Kingdom, Rule.

*Ryotwary System* : A system of land tenure where the peasant is a proprietor and has direct relations with the Government without any intermediary.

*Satyagrahi* : One who follows the principles of Satyagraha.

*Swadeshi* : Belonging to one's own country.

*Swaraj* : Self-rule.

*Taluka* : A revenue division of about the same size as a Tahsil, i.e., consisting of about a lakh of population.

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